

IMPRIMATUR,

JOHAN. WILLS,

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WADH. COLL. JULY 1, 1794.



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A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED

IN LAMBETH CHAPEL,

AT THE

CONSECRATION

OF

HENRY REGINALD LORD BISHOP OF BRISTOL,

On SUNDAY, MAY 11, 1794.

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STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH,

AND

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MDCCXCIV.



JOHN xviii. 36.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

THESE expressions have often been converted into an argument against all religious establishments whatsoever: but the context assuredly does not warrant such an interpretation. It should seem, that our blessed Lord meant only to allude to the spiritual nature of his Kingdom, and to disclaim those ideas of earthly power and dominion which he had often been suspected of encouraging, and which his disciples had long so fondly cherished: he meant not surely for ever to seclude the ministers of his Gospel from all commerce with the world, or to forbid them the enjoyment of those emoluments which are necessary for their support, and those honours which it is the natural and the laudable wish of man to obtain.

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If indeed Christianity was designed for the practical use of mankind, it was absolutely necessary that the persons who were to explain and propagate it's truths, should mix in the common conversation and intercourse of the world; and, when all extraordinary assistance from Heaven was withdrawn, when God himself no longer "bore them witness with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and with gifts of the Holy Ghost," it was necessary to give them the aid and support of human institutions, to form them into a Society, with laws and ordinances, and privileges of their own, and to enable them to dedicate their time and their talents exclusively to the cultivation of religious truth.

For the internal government of a Christian Society, a model hath been given us in the practice of the Apostles themselves: but even in this instance we are not positively commanded to follow that model; still less are we instructed of what nature the civil existence of the Christian Church was to be in future ages, or what was to be the situation of the ministers of the Gospel; whether they were to be separated

* Heb. ii. 4.

from

from all other members of the same community, or to be blended with them in one common mass, and to acknowledge one common jurisdiction. Upon all these points the voice of Revelation hath been silent; general lessons of obedience, and general exhortations to social order, are all that the Apostles have given us. It hath been permitted to men to apply these lessons for themselves, and to act upon the general principle as their own discretion should direct them.

If then no specific directions for the institution and regulation of an Ecclesiastical establishment are to be found in the writings of the Apostles, it remains for human prudence to determine what degree of relation or connection shall subsist between a National Church and the Constitution of the State, and in what way it may be possible to ascertain and secure the rights of those persons who are set apart for the purpose of teaching the word of God, and administering his holy Sacraments, without interfering with the authority of the Civil Magistrate, or violating the order and harmony of a well regulated Community.

At the commencement of the Reformation, it

was an indisputable fact, that the degree of power which the Church had claimed, and exercised, had materially interfered with the peace and order of civil Government. It was indeed this very grievance which may be reckoned amongst the leading causes of the Reformation, and which contributed perhaps more than any thing else to assist it's progress. That it was necessary to destroy the Papal Despotism, before any effectual plan of reform could be adopted, was a point allowed by all Protestants: so far, there could be no disagreement. It was acknowledged too, that no reform whatsoever could be either right, or just, or acceptable in the sight of God, that tended in any way to produce confusion or disorder in civil Society. But when the important question of Ecclesiastical government came to be discussed, there was no longer the same unanimity: a thousand local circumstances might, and did, create diversity of opinion. It might be safer in one country to invest the Church with more power and authority than it would be in another; and where the written word of God prescribed no certain rule, but all was left to the free choice and determination of man, it ill becomes Protestant Churches hastily to censure and calumniate each other for having adopted different

ferent systems. Without any idea however of censuring other opinions, or other systems, we may safely say, that the Church of England, when she was emancipated from the yoke of foreign jurisdiction, determined wisely in avowing the Supremacy of her own Sovereign.

One might venture indeed to rest the merit of this great and fundamental doctrine of our establishment upon the eagerness with which the advocates of Popery opposed it. They were well aware that, with the loss of it's controuling power, the court of Rome would lose it's credit, and it's influence, as well as the facility of propagating it's pernicious errors; and they failed not with all their learning and all their eloquence—for they were indeed deficient in neither—they failed not to combat a doctrine so fatal to their cause; they contended that it was a novel and unheard of theory, the arbitrary invention of separatists from the common faith, who wished only to break the unity of the visible Church of Christ. On the other hand, the reformers maintained that it was sanctioned by the constant and uniform practice of antiquity; that it had continued in full force through a long succession of ages; and that it only yielded at last to the resistless torrent of corruption, which
had

had swept away every sound and right principle of religion and of government.

The superstitious piety of former times, if piety it may be called, had long accustomed mankind to behold the Papal power with awe and veneration ; and the Romish canonists were ever fond of defending it upon the ground of antient and undisturbed possession. It was forgotten by what slow and gradual steps, by what painful and laborious perseverance, the Bishops of Rome had at last accomplished the grand object of their ambition. In the plenitude of their authority it was forgotten that there had been a time when their jurisdiction was limited to the City in which they lived, and the Diocese over which they presided ; and that, however the splendour of their lives, and their residence in the imperial City, might give them some sort of preeminence, it was a preeminence of estimation, and of opinion, and not of power : all this was forgotten, till sober and rational enquiry had recovered mankind from their ignorance, and awakened them to reason, and to truth.

As soon as the question came to be fairly discussed, and the earliest Ecclesiastical documents were carefully examined, it was found that the
supremacy

supremacy of the civil power had been in fact acknowledged from the very first establishment of a national Church. The Christian Emperors always claimed a right of controul over the general Councils and provincial Synods of the Clergy, and decided finally in all controversies, whether of discipline or faith. If the Bishops of Rome did occasionally exercise a judicial power, it was but a delegated power; and the Episcopal decree might afterwards be altered or annulled, at the pleasure of the Emperor.

When the mighty fabric of the Western Empire was dissolved and it's provinces dismembered, the Sovereignty originally vested in the Emperors was transferred to the several Princes of Europe: they governed the provincial Synods in their own dominions; they regulated the forms of public worship; and they enacted severe laws to repress the growing vices of the Clergy. Our Monarchs were accustomed to exercise precisely the same jurisdiction, and our Parliaments often formally protested against the interposition of any foreign authority. It was no new power therefore which was given to Henry, when he was first styled the Protector and supreme Head of the Church.

It was expressly declared by Elizabeth to be no new power which the legislature conferred upon her, but a recovery of her inherent right, and a renewal of those privileges which "of antient time were due to the imperial Crown of the realm".

Were it not too large a field of enquiry for the present occasion, it would not be a difficult task to trace the progress of the Papal power; to mark with what refined policy the Prelates of Rome availed themselves of the troubles of the Empire, to extort concessions from feeble and superstitious Princes; with what art they counteracted every project of Ecclesiastical reform, that was likely to contract their revenues, or to lessen their influence; with what uniformity of design they acted, sometimes overpowering the timid and irresolute, by threats of censure and excommunication, and sometimes frustrating the measures of more formidable adversaries, by fraud, and intrigue, and artifice, till they had at last established that one fatal maxim, that all legitimate authority whatsoever was derived from the Apostolic see;—all this it would be easy to explain, were it not more con-

^b See the *Injunctions of Queen Elizabeth*.

sistent with my design to consider what were the views of the great founders of our Ecclesiastical polity, when they restored to our Sovereigns the rights of which they had been unjustly deprived.

The supporters of the Papal usurpations, however, it must be remembered, were not their only adversaries: there were Protestants, to whom the doctrine of the Supremacy of the civil Magistrate was no less obnoxious than to the Papists, and who contended for the unlimited jurisdiction of their Synods and Consistories with the same perseverance, and the same ability, that the Catholics did for the divine and unalienable right of the Bishops of Rome: as a matter of right, derived from the practice of the primitive Church, and sanctioned by the constant usage of antiquity, the authority of Ecclesiastical Synods, in the extent to which they would have carried it, was not at all more defensible, than the authority of the Pope; in both cases the evidence of History was equally applicable, and equally conclusive. But Calvin himself, the great founder of the Presbyterian discipline, had recourse to other arguments. In the height of his own authority as President of the Ecclesiastical Judicatory, and possessing a

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considerable

considerable degree of political, as well as of spiritual power, he was as eager to reduce the influence of the civil Magistrate in the affairs of the Church, as his predecessor Zuingli had been to enlarge and to extend it. The encroachments, as he termed them, of the German Princes; the impropriety of their interference in matters which were said to be purely spiritual^c; and the impiety of subjecting the Church to any secular jurisdiction whatsoever, were the frequent topics of his eloquent and animated discourses. And the Puritans in this country, who had imbibed his principles, and formed their Synods upon his model, failed not to repeat and to enforce the arguments which he had taught them.

That any Lay person should be invested with Spiritual Jurisdiction, or authority; that he should be empowered to watch over, and to controul, the conduct of Ecclesiastical bodies; and above all, that he should be adorned with the exalted title of Supreme Head of the Church—a title given by an inspired Apostle to our Lord and Saviour himself, to raise him “above all
“principalities, and powers, and might, and
“dominion, and every name that is named, not

^c Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, book viii.

“only

“only in this world, but in that which is to come”—all this was declared to be an infringement upon the religious rights of mankind, a total demolition of the Church, and an impious profanation of the most sacred titles. It was esteemed to be so, not by ignorant zealots or misguided enthusiasts, but by men whose serious and pious scruples merited every respect and indulgence. To quiet their scruples therefore, and to answer their objections, it became necessary to explain what was intended by the term “Head of the Church,” and to define the power which the Sovereign was to possess.

Our Church wanted not able advocates to defend her from the censures both of the Papists and the Puritans. But we cannot do better than appeal to the very words of our articles^c.

“We give not to our Princes the ministering either of God’s word or of the Sacraments; but that only prerogative which we see to have been given always to all godly Princes in holy Scripture by God himself.” Indeed, to give them the mi-

^a Ephes. i. 21.

^c Art. 37.

nistering of God's word and of the Sacraments, would be to destroy at once the essential properties of a Church, which must be composed of men who seclude themselves in a great degree from all secular employments, for the especial purpose of ministering continually in the house of God. To them, and them only, can be entrusted the public interpretation of Scripture, and the due administration of those ceremonies which were instituted as pledges of Christian faith: for in this particular we have a plain and infallible rule to direct us. The practice of the Apostles cannot be mistaken: we know that, upon the establishment of the primitive Churches, they appointed Pastors differing in rank, and power, and authority; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons: we know too, that these Pastors were solemnly admitted to the exercise of their ministerial functions, by prayer and imposition of hands; and that none were permitted to exercise those functions who had not so received the imposition of hands, with prayer and blessing.

If therefore the Church of Christ be not commanded strictly to adhere to this rite throughout all ages, at least we are certain that it comes recommended to us from an authority, which we acknowledge as next in order and obligation

obligation to that of our blessed Saviour himself, the authority of the Apostles, and the constant practice of the primitive Church, when as yet it had not deviated from the purity and simplicity of the Apostolic times.

Besides, even if we had no such authority to guide us, it would be an act of common prudence not to suffer the caprice of an individual to determine to whom he shall delegate so great and important a trust. If persons acting by virtue of a civil commission merely, without any previous qualification, or any religious form of admission, were to go forth into the world as ministers of the Gospel, what security should we have that the word of God would be taught in all its purity? Is it not rather to be feared, that every enthusiast might occasionally be empowered to propagate his visionary theories, and thus we should fall into the very danger, and the very evils, which it is the primary object of religious establishments to prevent?

We deny therefore to our Kings, to use the words of the learned Hooker, we deny to our Kings " that spiritual jurisdiction, which hath
" with it inseparably joined power to administer
" the word and Sacraments ; power to ordain, to
" judge

“ judge as an Ordinary; to excommunicate, and
 “ such like^f.” All these acts of power the Church
 hath reserved to herself, and to her they truly
 and properly belong. But to superintend, and
 to visit, to correct and to reform abuses, to
 convene Ecclesiastical assemblies, to ratify the
 ordinances which these assemblies frame, and to
 enforce their execution—all these duties, and
 these rights, belong to him who possesses the
 Sovereign authority of the State. It must be
 observed however, if indeed it be necessary to
 suggest so plain and obvious a consideration,
 that the power of which we are speaking is not
 a vague and indefinite power; subject to no
 controul, and guided by no rule, but the arbi-
 trary will and caprice of the Prince, “ What
 “ power the King hath, he hath by law,” says
 the learned writer before quoted: “ the bounds
 “ and limits of it are known; and it is not per-
 “ mitted to Prelates, or to Princes, to judge and
 “ determine at their own discretion; but Law
 “ hath prescribed what both shall do^g.”

It is in this way then that our establishment
 is secured without endangering the State. Our

^f Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, book viii.

^g Ibid.

Church forms, as it ought, a part of the State ; and the title of “ Head of the Church,” and the power of controul which that title implies, is given to him, in whose hands the laws have placed the supreme executive authority of the State. If therefore it be our right to assemble and to deliberate, it is his duty to watch over our deliberations, and to be careful that nothing be done inconsistent with the general welfare of the community. The safety of the State does not require that the right of teaching the word of God, or administering the Sacraments, should be vested in the civil magistrate : it does require that the ministers, who are appointed under the forms of their own establishment, should be subject to his controul ; for this indeed was, as has been stated before, the great evil of Popery, that there existed in every European State a body of men, who were in reality the subjects of a foreign power ; who were bound to support that power by every motive that can influence the conduct of man, by interest, by similarity of sentiments, and by professions of inviolable fidelity : they were therefore the best and most active ministers of that power ; they punished with unrelenting cruelty all who ventured to deny it’s infallibility, or to dispute it’s decrees ; and they scrupled not, if it
was

was necessary for their purpose, to excite a spirit of jealousy and discontent, to alienate the affections of the people, and to persuade them to transfer to others the loyalty and allegiance due to their legitimate Sovereign.

Experience had taught our Reformers the magnitude of this evil; and, as the surest method of preventing it in future, they disclaimed all partial exemptions, and all invidious distinctions, and declared, that, as members of the same commonwealth, no difference should subsist between the ministers of their Church, and the persons whom they were to instruct; that the Clergy and the Laity should be subject to the same laws, and amenable to the same punishments. Thus while they reserved for themselves that right of internal regulation, which every Society must possess, and those privileges which belong to the very nature of a religious Society, they gave up to the State that power of general superintendence and controul which the State alone could safely exercise.

It became therefore from that time the province of the civil Magistrate to defend the Doctrines of our Church, and to support her discipline. Forms of public worship, declaratory

ratory confessions of faith, and tests of conformity, are not therefore, as it is often asserted, the inventions of Ecclesiastical bigotry, to force the consciences of men ; they are the decrees of the community at large, for the maintenance and support of that system, which they believe to be just and right.

It is our pride and boast, that in the succession of time we have carried farther in practice the moderation and the love of peace, which tempered the zeal, and directed the counsels of our ancestors. As circumstances vary, the practical use of every power will vary also ; the watchful jealousy, and the scrupulous maintenance of right, which are necessary to cherish and support rising institutions, may well be suffered to rest, when those institutions have attained to full and mature vigour. It is now a long time since we have been delivered from the most fatal of all evils ; two rival powers, each striving for the mastery, each obstinately bent upon destroying the privileges and lessening the authority of the other. Our Ecclesiastical and Civil Politics are blended, and interwoven with each other : our just privileges have long been defined and settled ; and we appeal to the common law of our country, for the support of our rank in the

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community,

community, and the security of our antient possessions.

Be it ever remembered however, for it is a truth fraught with salutary instruction, and never to be erased from our minds — be it ever remembered, that the safety, the tranquillity, and the happiness which we now enjoy, were purchased by many a hard struggle, and many a painful conflict, with bitter and implacable adversaries. We have had our evil days, our days of doubt and dismay, of sorrow and lamentation; we have been persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed: the Providence of God hath ever interfered to save us. Let us hold fast the blessings which in his mercy he hath bestowed upon us. If we may indulge a reasonable hope, that, in our separation from the Romish Communion, we have avoided the errors into which other Churches have fallen; if we have approached nearer to the purity of the Apostolic times, "*to the very foundation and head-springs of Christ's Church*;" it is our bounden duty to retain what we have, and not to be led away by idle theories, in quest of something more pure, more simple, or more perfect. I mean not to use the language of admonition; they are the ideas which the solemnity of this day

day naturally suggests: that solemnity will at once explain, and justify all that has been said. We are going to send forth into the world, not an inferior or subordinate minister of the Gospel, but a ruler in the house of God; who is to direct, to controul, and to govern. We invoke the assistance of Heaven to pour down upon him the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and to adorn him with all the gifts and all the graces that besit so exalted a station. But we do not send him forth as a new member of the State; we do not pretend to invest him with temporal authority, or temporal privileges; and in the very act of admission to his high dignity, we acknowledge the Supremacy of the Civil Power. At this very time then it becomes us devoutly to pray that the fatal schisms and dissensions, which the piety and the wisdom of our forefathers composed, may never more revive; but that the Church, and the State, may cooperate in mutual agreement, and with similar views, for the promotion of Virtue, and the advancement of true Religion.

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 once explain, and justify all that has been said.
 We are going to send forth into the world, not
 an inferior or subordinate minister of the God,
 but a man in the house of God; who is
 to be, to control, and to govern. We
 intend the assistance of heaven as your count
 upon him the effusion of the Holy Spirit, and
 to show forth with all the gifts and all the
 graces that have created a nation. But we
 do not find him with a new member of the
 State; we do not pretend to invest him with
 temporal authority, or temporal privileges; and
 in the very act of admission to his high dignity,
 we acknowledge the supremacy of the Civil
 Power. At the same time it becomes us
 devoutly to pray that the State should not
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 are forever connected, any more than the
 but that the Church, and the State, may enter
 into in mutual agreement, and with similar
 views for the promotion of Virtue, and the ad-
 vancement of true Religion.

4 OC 58

